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AUTHOR Freund, Maxine B.
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ABSTRACT

The report documents activities of the 3-year (1986-1989) Assessment as Intervention Project at George Washington University (District of Columbia). Major activities of the project included: data collection with 25 families of newborn at-risk premature infants, including assessment-intervention sessions at 3, 6, 9, and 12 months of age; data analysis including identification of interview themes for each family; and dissemination activities (especially publication of a manual describing the naturalistic research process, results, and implications). (DB)

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The George Washington University
WASHINGTON DC

DEPARTMENT OF TEACHER PREPARATION AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Final Report

Assessment as Intervention:

Discerning the Needs of High-Risk Infants and Their Families

Principal Investigator: Maxine B. Freund, Ed.D.
Project Director: Janice L. Hanson, Ph.D.
Project Researchers:
Jane Stanga, M.A.
Rosalie Fedoruk, Ph.D.
E. Rebecca White, M.S.

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Final Report

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Introduction

A detailed presentation of the research activities, findings and implications of the Assessment as Intervention Project appears in the accompanying manual that resulted from the project: A Journey with Parents and Infants: Rethinking Parent-Professional Interactions. The following delineation of project activities supplements the descriptions that appear in this manual. These activities took place over the grant award period, 1986-1989.

Foundational Activities

Approximately the first six months of the project encompassed activities that built the foundation for the remainder of the project. These included the following:

1. *Hire and train project researchers and research assistant.* Staff training covered both the ethnographic research approach and the assessment-intervention approach to developmental assessments, both of which were basic to the project. During this period of training, the project director worked with the project researchers to establish reliability in the use of both the Brazelton Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale and the Bayley Scales of Infant Development. In addition, the project researchers received extensive training in the assessment-intervention approach to developmental assessments, so that the project researchers were prepared to practice the principles of the assessment-intervention model consistently during the project activities. The project director also trained the researchers in the assumptions and methodology of ethnographic research.

2. *Revise and develop forms for data collection.* Although the project had a detailed model of assessment-intervention at the beginning, it was necessary to modify some of the checklists in the original model so that they were better suited to the research activities of the project. This included changing the format of the forms to allow efficient use of space to record research notes, and developing a short checklist for use during each assessment-intervention session during the project. This Short Checklist for Assessment-Intervention not only simplified the use of the assessment-intervention model, but also provided a way to assess the consistency of the use of the model across researchers. Both the original assessment-intervention forms and the revised research forms appear in the appendices of the project manual.

3. *Develop formats for developmental assessment reports.* The project staff developed formats for written assessment reports that were consistent with the principles of assessmentintervention and responsive to parents" needs. These report formats also appear in the appendices of the project manual.

4. *Establish procedures for referral of respondents from the hospital to the study.* Although the Department of Teacher Preparation and Special Education had an existing relationship with the physicians and other staff members in the Division of Newborn Services at The George Washington University Hospital, it was necessary to extend this relationship, develop an understanding of the research project among the staff in the Department of Newborn Services, and establish a smooth set of procedures for referral of parents and infants from the neonatal intensive care unit to the study.

Data Collection

Data collection activities filled the second half of the first project year and continued throughout the second project year. Thirty families participated in the Assessment as Intervention project; 25 of these families completed all of the project activities. With these families, the project staff completed the following data collection activities:

1. *Hospital observations.* The project director or a project researcher met the parents in the neonatal intensive care unit during a visit with their baby. This provided an opportunity to explain the project, obtain informed consent to participate, and build a beginning understanding of the parents and their infant. The researchers provided notes describing each hospital observation, with an emphasis on factors that might affect parent's reactions to later developmental assessment-intervention session.

2. *Brazelton Neonatal Behavioral Assessment Scale sessions.* At 40 weeks corrected age, the researchers completed a Brazelton assessment session with the families, with an accompanying written assessment report and communication of the results to the Division of Newborn Services.

3. *Assessment-intervention sessions.* At 3, 6, 9 and 12 months corrected ages, the researchers completed an assessment-intervention using the Bayley Scales. Each assessment-intervention was preceded by a pre-assessment interview and followed by a post-assessment interview with the parents. Each assessment-intervention resulted in a written assessment report, pre-assessment interview notes, assessment session notes, and a post-assessment interview report. Researchers communicated the assessment results of the Division of Newborn Services. In addition, the researchers completed the

Checklist for assessment-intervention for each session, noting their completion of each item on the checklist and recording the items that they considered most important for each family at each point, with the rationale for their choices.

Prior to the 9 and 12 month assessment-intervention sessions, the project staff revised the post-assessment interview questions, on the basis of their learning up to that point.

4. *Final evaluative interviews.* The project staff developed a set of open-ended interview questions to guide final interviews with the families, conducted the interviews, and provided audio tape recordings of the interviews.

Data Analysis Activities

Data analysis activities took place throughout the data collection phase of the project, and continued through the third project year. Data analysis encompassed the following activities:

1. *Staff discussions.* Throughout the project, staff discussed their observations and tentative interpretations of information gathered from the parents in the study. These discussions helped the project staff refine their insights and questions, and formed the basis of questions and explorations as the project proceeded.

2. *Post-assessment reports.* After each past-assessment interview, the researchers wrote brief reports that summarized the information that parents shared in the interviews. These reports essentially recorded the themes of each interview, and as such constituted early qualitative analysis of the project data.

3. *Lists of interview themes for each family.* Before the final evaluative interview with each family, the researcher reviewed all notes and reports about prior conversations with that family. On the basis of these interviews, the researcher listed the themes that had emerged in the family's reactions to the assessment-intervention process. During the final interview, the researcher asked the parents to confirm, clarify, change or add to this summary of the parents' reactions to developmental assessment-interventions and parent-professional interactions.

4. *Analysis of final evaluative interviews.* The project research assistant transcribed each final interview. During the final year of the project, the project director and one project researcher analyzed these interview transcripts, using a qualitative analysis process that is described in detail in

the project manual. This resulted in a list of themes for each family's final interview; these themes were compared and sorted across families to develop themes that ran across the final interviews. The project director, project researcher, and research assistant then sorted all of the family themes into tentative final interview themes, and revised the final interview themes after discussing and comparing the sorting. Finally, the principal investigator performed an audit on a sampling of interview transcripts and themes, to establish the credibility of the analysis process.

5. *Analysis of hospital observation notes.* A project researcher went through the hospital observation notes from the beginning of the project to identify points that related to the themes from the final interview analysis.

Dissemination Activities

Dissemination activities took place throughout the project. The major dissemination activities included the following:

Association for the Care of Children's Health, 24th Annual Conference, Anaheim, California, May 1989. Hanson, Janice L. Developmental Follow-up for Premature Infants--Meeting Parents' Needs Within an Assessment/Intervention Model.

Association for the Care of Children's Health, 24th Annual Conference, Anaheim, California. May 1989. Hanson, Janice, L. Developmental Follow-up for Premature Infants--Parent/Professional Collaboration within an Assessment/Intervention Model.

The Council for Exceptional Children, 67th Annual convention, San francisco, California. April 1989. Hanson, Janice, L. Developmental Follow-up for Premature Infants--Responding to Parents' Needs within an Assessment/Intervention Model.

American Educational Research Association, Annual Meeting, San Francisco, California, March 1989. Hanson, Janice L. and Maxine B. Freund. Naturalistic Inquiry in Early Intervention.

Parent Care, Inc., 5th Annual Conference, Newport Bach, California. September 25-28, 1988. Hanson, Janice L. Discerning the Needs of High-Risk Infants and Their Families.

International Association for Infant Mental Health, 3rd Biennial Conference Providence, Rhode Island. September 22, 1988. Hanson, Janice, Rosalie Fedoruk, Jane Stanga, and E. Rebecca White.

Parent-Professional Partnerships During Developmental Assessments--An Example of Ethnographic Research in a Clinical Setting.

The Council for Exceptional Children, 66th Annual Convention, Washington, D.C. March 29, 1988. Hanson, Janice, Robin Jackson, Jane Stanga, Rosalie Fedoruk, and E. Rebecca White, Building Fartnerships with Parents During Infant Assessments.

Poster at the Fifth Biennial National Training Institute of the National Center for Clinical Infant Programs, Washington, D.C. December 1987. Hanson, Janice and Rosalie Fedoruk, Assessment as Intervention: Discerning the Needs of High-Risk Infants and Their Families.

2. *Other presentations*, which included the following:

"What Do We Know about What Parents Want form a Family-Focussed Assessment/Intervention?" Presented by the project director at The Dynamics of Family Intervention, 7th Annual Summer Institute, The George Washington University, Washington, DC, July 1989.

"Enhancing Collaboration During the Assessment Process," presented by the project director at the Parent Leader Workshop for the Team of Advocates for Special Kids, Santa Ana, California, June , 1989.

Presentations on Assessment as Intervention, Motivating Families, and Obtaining Optimal Infant Assessments, by the project director at "Serving Very Young Children with Handicaps and Their Families in Northeastern Minnesota" conference, Duluth, Minnesota. November 1-2, 1988.

"Utilizing a Family-Focussed Aassessment/Intervention," a day-long session by the project director at the 6th Annual Infant and Family Assessment Summer Institute, The George Washington University, Washington, DC, July 1988.

"The Flip Side of a Test Kit--Thinking about Assessment as Intervention," a workshop presented by the project director at the 4th annual Special Education Day of Excellence conference, Marshall, Minnesota. March 7, 1988.

"The Flip Side of the Test Kit--Thinking about Assessment as Intervention," keynote address by the project director at the Minnesota Early Childhood Coordinators' Conference, Brainerd, Minnesota. January 1988.

A presentation by the project director in Early Intervention Summer Institute sponsored by the Early Intervention Programs of the Department of Teacher Preparation and Special Education, The George Washington University, July 1987.

3. *Responses to inquiries.* The project staff responded to numerous inquiries about the Assessment as Intervention study throughout the course of the project. This offered a vehicle for providing written summaries of the project, handouts developed for the presentations related to the project, and numerous copies of the paper entitled "Naturalistic Inquiry and Early Intervention," which was presented at the American Education Research Association conference.

4. *The project manual.* The project resulted in a manual (enclosed) describing the research process, research results, and implications for the field. Five hundred copies of the manual were printed; to date, approximately 250 copies have been distributed. There is also a brochure announcing the availability of the manual (attached). The families in the study, students at The George Washington University, and other professionals and parents in the field have received copies of the manual.

5. *Journal articles.* An article entitled "The Assessment-Intervention Model: Using Developmental Assessment as a Framework for Home-Based Early Intervention" has been submitted to the Journal, Topics in Early Childhood Special Education (Rebecca R. Fewell, issue editor). In addition, the principal investigator and project director plan to submit "Naturalistic Inquiry and Early Intervention" for journal publication. Several other project-related articles are in process, including an article describing the research findings, an informal article targeted to early intervention teachers, an article on naturalistic research methodology, and an article describing the uses of the assessment-intervention model in training for early intervention professionals.

6. *Listing in research directory.* The Assessment as Intervention project is described in a directory of research activities available from the Association for the Care of Children's Health.

7. *Training activities.* In addition to the presentations listed above, the assessment-intervention model is used in the masters-level transdisciplinary infant training program in the Department of Special Education and Teacher Preparation at The George Washington University. The department's HCEEP project entitled Project CAPS: Caregiver and Parent Support (1989-1992) also incorporates the model in the early intervention project.

Other Field-Related Activities

The project director facilitated a small-group presentation and discussion at the HCEEP Research Project Directors meeting in Washington, D.C., July 1989. This illustrates the importance of the Assessment As Intervention project as an application of naturalistic methodology, which is gaining interest in the field of Special Education. In addition, the principal investigator and project director have both reviewed grant proposals for the Office of Special Education Programs.

Concluding Comments

The Assessment as Intervention project established an ongoing process of inquiry, application to clinical practice, and application to special education training activities. The wealth of data collected form the basis for analysis and application that go beyond the commitment of the project, and will very likely lead to further publication, thought, and research in the areas of assessment, parent-professional interactions, and early intervention.

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